

Grandpa was an oracle,
must have foreseen my mother
somewhere, screwing someone,
my dad home, restless in his hospital bed.
That's why grandpa painted our front door
red in the sweaty neck of summer
for the daughter-in-law he never loved.
It was sliced skin before we felt it,
still too early to see punishment
in the scarlet paint

my mother loves anyway.
She denies her hair is auburn,
thinks it's still the deep stain of blood
she charms from sick people at work,
the tint of the minivan she drives home
on the phone with her boyfriend.
When she walks through our front door,
though the paint sizzles like a neon sign,
though it tries to stitch itself to her breast,
somehow it doesn't stick to her,
but slips right off her chest.